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SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Identical letters dated 11 March 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement issued by the Government of the Republic of Serbia on 10 March 1998 concerning the situation in Kosovo and Metohija.

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as an official document of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 113 (b) of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Vladislav JOVANOVIĆ
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* A/53/50.

ANNEX

Statement issued by the Government of the Republic of Serbia on 10 March 1998 concerning the situation in Kosovo and Metohija

At its today's meeting, the Government of the Republic of Serbia reviewed the information of the relevant ministries on the situation in Kosovo and Metohija and, in that framework, the information of the Ministry of the Interior on the measures taken against terrorism, submitted by Colonel-General Vlastimir Djordjevic, Head of the Department for Public Security and Dragisa Ristivojevic, Deputy Head of the Department of State Security.

The Government assessed that the recent activities of the Ministry of the Interior of Serbia in Kosovo and Metohija were carried out exclusively in the function of combatting terrorism, which has escalated in the past few months bringing about the loss of life of a great number of innocent citizens-Serbs, Albanians and members of the Ministry of the Interior.

Consequently, the Government noted that the undertaken measures had a strictly limited scope with a view to defending against ruthless attacks of terrorists and to liquidating the terrorist core, and that they were carried out respecting regulations and security of other citizens and of their property.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia condemns in the harshest terms the terrorism of the Albanian separatists in Kosovo and Metohija and confirms the readiness of all authorities in Serbia to ensure in Kosovo and Metohija, as in the rest of Serbia, the rule of law, full equality and life in peace and security of all citizens, regardless of their nationality.

Serbia makes a clear distinction between terrorists and terrorism on one hand, and the members of the Albanian national minority on the other, and calls upon responsible representatives of the Albanian national minority to disassociate themselves from terrorism and join in universal international condemnation of that scourge.

The Ministry of the Interior informed the public of all measures taken against the terrorists. Diplomatic representatives in Belgrade and foreign journalists were given the opportunity to visit the villages in the Drenica area where the activities against the terrorists were carried out and see for themselves that the activities of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia were strictly in the function of capturing terrorist gangs and preventing their activities.

In view of the fact that they were able to directly establish the actual state of affairs and that the authorities had nothing to hide, the Government considers that for the sake of full truth it would also be useful if an expert group of the International Committee of the Red Cross visited Kosovo and Metohija and in cooperation with the Yugoslav Red Cross, verified the rumours circulated in some media, and in that respect, extends an invitation to them to do so.

It is the long-standing policy of Serbia not to differentiate among its citizens on the basis of their national, religious or any other background. The Government of Serbia as well as all other authorities in the Republic equally care of all citizens of the Republic of Serbia and shall not allow in the future either any injustice against any of its citizens, including the members of national minorities whose rights are protected in the Republic of Serbia in accordance with the highest international standards.

The Government most resolutely confirms that all questions related to Kosovo and Metohija should be resolved within Serbia by political means and in accordance with international standards in the field of protection of the rights of national minorities. There is a consensus of all political forces and parties of influence in the Republic on that score, as well as the position of the relevant international factors, representing the best guarantee for its successful resolution.

The Government takes this opportunity to reaffirm that it is open to have all questions related to the realization of civil and human rights of all citizens in Kosovo and Metohija as well as of faster economic and cultural development, resolved through dialogue and by political means, in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, European and international standards, OSCE principles, Paris Charter and the Charter of the United Nations. The Government particularly points out that it accepts that all rights and principles contained in the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe on the protection of national minorities be realized in this way.

By its overall policy and concrete measures, the Government shall ensure conditions for a stable political, economic and cultural development, promotion of relations of tolerance and trust among all

citizens in Kosovo and Metohija. The Government proves this readiness by the fact that its representatives in the Group 3+3 have in the usual manner already submitted their proposal of operative measures for the implementation of the Agreement on the normalization of the education system in Kosovo and Metohija.

In accordance with the above positions, the Government of the Republic of Serbia invites the responsible representative of the Albanian national minority to embark upon open dialogue in order to resolve all concrete issues, because it is the only way to promote political processes with a view to resolving vital questions of the citizens in this Province of ours.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia once again stresses that the only perspective of Kosovo and Metohija is in peace, development, tolerance, equality and co-existence.